



## FACTSHEET 7: Considerations For A Renewable Energy System

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### 1. Grants

The government funded 'Low Carbon Building Programme' project offers numerous grants for domestic, community and businesses renewable energy projects. They provide a list of accredited installers and manufacturers, dealing only with the former 'Clear Skies' accredited equipment. Grants are only eligible to those using accredited installers and/or equipment. Accredited installers and suppliers will also be able to help with applying for the grant. There is a specific funding stream for individual property owners, with a pot of money that will be allocated on a first come first served basis, through a continual programme until the money (£6.5m) runs out. The grant levels vary between technologies and is subject to regular review. For example, Solar Hot Water systems can receive up to £400 regardless of size of the system, whereas Wind Turbines can get up to £1000 per kw of their installed capacity, up to a maximum of £5000.

To qualify you will also need to have installed a reasonable level of energy efficiency measures. These are:

- 270 mm of loft insulation
- Cavity wall insulation (where appropriate)
- Have basic thermostat and programme controls for your heating systems
- Installed low-energy light bulbs (wherever appropriate)

Community and Business grants are offered on a slightly different basis, it is a competitive programme where by projects are assessed on their value. There will be calls for bids and applications periodically throughout the year. Please check the website for the next applicable date.

Most electricity supply companies will also have a grant system to help their customers install their own private renewable energy schemes – contact your electricity supplier for further information.

### 2. Planning permission

Like most installations, renewable systems will often require planning permission. When thinking about any renewable energy development it will be worth contacting your Local Planning Authority and finding out whether you need to apply for planning permission. With the Government recognising the damaging effects of conventional energy production there is more and more planning support for renewable energy developments of any size, and the need for planning permission should not be seen as a deterrent for these schemes.

### 3. Green Electricity Tariffs

Even if installing a renewable energy system is not suitable for your premises, it is possible to purchase your electricity from a renewable source, by switching to a 'Green' electricity tariff. This will typically be available at a slight premium, but will send a strong message to electricity companies that green energy is the preferred consumer option. For further information on the green tariffs, visit [www.greenprices.co.uk](http://www.greenprices.co.uk), an independent website dedicated to green electricity tariffs.

### 4. Further Information

For further and more detailed information on any of these renewable energy ideas please contact:

- **DARE** on 01837 89200, or [mail@devondare.org](mailto:mail@devondare.org). **DARE** also offers a comprehensive range of site assessments and feasibility studies for individuals, public bodies, community groups and commercial enterprises. To discuss what renewable energy potential you site may have, what funding might be available, or to organise a site visit, please get in touch.
- Any of the enclosed suppliers all of whom are DARE members (N.B. DARE provides no guarantees about the services offered by our members);
- Low Carbon Building Programme visit – [www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk](http://www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk) - or by telephoning their Helpline on 0800 915 7722
- Visit [www.clearskies.co.uk](http://www.clearskies.co.uk) for a full a list of accredited installers and suppliers in your area.

### 5. The economics of a small-scale RE development

Current markets are driven by an economics that aims only for economic growth. Yet it seems important for our environment that we address the issues of sustainability as well as growth.

Responsible consumerism should not just look at the ticket price of a good, but also consider all the attached costs of the production and provision of a product. It is important then that when we consider the costs of the energy we consume we take into account all the consequences attached to its production, and not just the upfront monetary price of purchasing it.



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When thinking about the costs of installing renewable energy systems we need to make sure the costs are addressed in a way that takes into account the issues of responsibility and sustainability. In this way we can fully consider the economics, viability and appeal of such systems.

**There is one key short-term economic consideration that cannot be got around – the initial cost of installing a system.** Getting some quotes and working out the type of system you need will answer this important question: whether you can simply afford installation costs? If this issue can be addressed, and with substantial government funding and reducing prices this is becoming more and more likely, then we need to think about the longer term economic and environmental benefits of these systems.

**Thinking long-term if the money you save on conventionally bought fuel or power pays for a system within the system's expected lifetime, then you will have saved some money (perhaps more than expected as fuel prices rise), or at the very least be financially neutral.** These considerations can make renewable energy systems attractive without even thinking about the full costs of conventionally produced energy.

**Renewable energy installations can also add to the value of properties, and so capital investment can be substantially offset in this way by an increase in asset value.** Some green developments already advertise their low 'carbon rating' and low running costs as a selling point, and installing renewable energy on any building will bring these attractions and a potential increase in value. There is an increasing potential for the introduction of a 'carbon tax' on individuals and businesses, which sees our carbon emissions taxed in an effort to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> production. Whilst this is only a possibility, opting for a renewable energy system could potentially reduce financial burdens of this sort.

**Even if there are no major economic savings, there are still costs that these systems do not incur that make them attractive and viable options in other ways.** Primarily these systems will not have the attached cost of CO<sub>2</sub> production, and the resultant threat of global warming. **Global warming is recognized by many as the biggest threat to human society we have, with the potential to lead to worldwide droughts, agricultural failure, sea-level rise, increased natural weather disasters, flooding, and the resulting social degradation of famine, poverty, and war.**

**Renewable energy systems offset the significant cost of environmental damage resulting from the CO<sub>2</sub> production that comes with traditional energy sources.** For instance a solar hot water system producing 1200KWh of usable heat a year would prevent the release of 250kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per year if displacing gas, and 500kg of CO<sub>2</sub> if displacing electricity, according to the Carbon Trust website. This is a significant CO<sub>2</sub> saving, and obviously systems producing more energy would prevent even more CO<sub>2</sub> being released.

**Fossil fuel supply will diminish, leading to a genuine potential for dramatic increases in fossil fuel prices in the foreseeable future.** Britain is already experiencing a steady increase in net imports as our production starts to decline. It also seems highly likely that the global fossil fuel market will become increasingly more volatile as supply struggles to keep up with increasing demand.

**For solar, wind and water there are guarantees about the source and cost of the energy – it is abundant, continuing and free.** Biomass fuels will have a price, but with their production being sustainable, it seems that they will be widely available and highly affordable, and increasingly more and more economically competitive when compared to fossil fuels.

**If we want our actions as energy consumers to take into account issues of environmental sustainability, then we should not consider only the monetary costs of installing RE systems. It seems we have reached a stage where it is crucial for our environment that we start counting environmental damage as an actual cost of energy production.**